

From Insurgency to Integration: The Strategic Defeat of Naxalism in India

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For over five decades, the Maoist insurgency, commonly known as [Naxalism](#), represented one of the most formidable internal security threats to India. Rooted in the exploitation of [socio-economic disparities](#) and [tribal marginalization](#), the movement once commanded a vast [Red Corridor](#) that stretched across multiple states and heavily impacted over [120+ districts](#). However, [by 2026](#), the Indian government declared a historic victory over this decades-long armed rebellion, shrinking the insurgency's footprint to mere fragments. This monumental achievement was not the result of physical force alone, but rather a masterclass in comprehensive counterinsurgency. India successfully eradicated the Maoist threat through a highly synchronized, multi-domain strategy that perfectly balanced robust security operations, technological modernization, financial asphyxiation, aggressive infrastructure development, and compassionate rehabilitation programs.

Strategic Reframing and the SAMADHAN Doctrine

The turning point in India's counterinsurgency campaign occurred when the state stopped treating Naxalism as a mere socio-political or law-and-order bargaining chip and decisively reframed it as a severe national security and [terrorism issue](#). This zero-tolerance approach was institutionalized through the [National Policy and Action Plan in 2015](#) and eventually crystallized in the [SAMADHAN strategy](#). SAMADHAN standing for *Smart Leadership, Aggressive Strategy, Motivation and Training, Actionable Intelligence, Dashboard-Based KPIs, Harnessing Technology, Action Plan for Each Theatre, and No Access to Financing*, provided a cohesive framework that united central and state efforts. By moving away from reactive containment and towards proactive elimination, the state ensured that every aspect of the Maoist ecosystem was simultaneously targeted.

[Intelligence-led security operations](#) and technological superiority on the kinetic front, the Indian security forces executed highly precise, intelligence-driven operations that dismantled the insurgency from the top down. Massive deployments of [Central Armed Police Forces \(CAPFs\)](#), [CoBRA commandos](#), and specialized state units like the [District Reserve Guard \(DRG\)](#) and [Greyhounds](#) systematically cleared erstwhile impenetrable strongholds. Game-changing offensives such as [Operation Kagar](#) (also known as Operation Black Forest), [Operation Octopus](#), and [Operation Double Bull](#) neutralized top-tier insurgent commanders and collapsed the Maoist command structure. The elimination of prominent leaders, including

the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist) General Secretary [Nambala Keshava Rao](#) (Basavaraju), created an unrecoverable leadership vacuum.

Crucially, the state leveraged cutting-edge technology to overcome the geographical advantages traditionally held by the insurgents. The deployment of [drone surveillance](#), [satellite imagery](#), [AI-assisted data analytics](#), and [location tracking](#) allowed forces to map dense forest terrains like Abujmahd and execute targeted strikes with unprecedented precision. To consolidate these territorial gains, the government constructed [612 fortified police stations](#) and established hundreds of new forward operating security camps deep within reclaimed zones.

Financial Asphyxiation of the Red Corridor

A vital component of India's success was the systematic dismantling of the financial networks that sustained the Naxalite war machine. Recognizing that insurgency requires massive funding, the government activated the [National Investigation Agency \(NIA\)](#) and the [Enforcement Directorate \(ED\)](#) to track and seize insurgent assets. The NIA created a dedicated vertical to choke Naxal financing under the [Prevention of Money Laundering Act \(PMLA\)](#), resulting in the seizure of tens of crores of rupees. With the NIA seizing assets worth over [₹40 crore](#) and the ED recovering [₹12 crore](#), financial networks that supported Naxalism have been disrupted. Additionally, states have confiscated [properties valued at ₹40 crore](#), and urban Naxals have experienced moral and psychological deteriorations that have diminished their ability to wage information operations. Additionally, national policies like [demonetization](#) dealt a severe blow to the cash-reliant extortion rackets operated by the Maoists, starving them of the logistics required to sustain their guerrilla army.

Winning Hearts and Minds

Military pressure alone could not have permanently eradicated Naxalism. The state recognized that it had to replace the insurgents' narrative of neglect with tangible governance. The government launched an unprecedented infrastructure push to integrate the most remote tribal regions into the national mainstream. By May 2025, the Road Requirement Plan (RRP-I) and the Road Connectivity Project for LWE-affected (left-wing extremism) regions had facilitated the construction of [14,618 kilometres of roads](#), thereby undermining the geographical isolation that Maoists had leveraged for decades. The [Border Roads Organisation \(BRO\)](#) played a heroic role, building bridges and highways in highly hostile terrains like Sukma and Bijapur, directly under the threat of IEDs and ambushes.

The government advanced rapid socio-economic empowerment to counter the insurgents' ideological appeal. The installation of [2,343 \(2G\) and 2,542 \(4G\) mobile towers](#) significantly reduced the digital divide, effectively ending the communication isolation in remote jungle areas. Financial inclusion was heavily prioritized, with the opening of over [1,000 bank branches](#), [937 ATMs](#), and [nearly 6,000 post offices](#) in affected districts. Initiatives such as the [Niyad Nella Nar scheme](#) were designed to transform Naxal-affected regions into sustainable villages by directly providing education, healthcare, and welfare support to particularly vulnerable tribal groups. By establishing [Ekalavya Model Residential Schools](#) and [Industrial Training Institutes \(ITIs\)](#), the state provided the tribal youth with education and employment, effectively cutting off the Maoists' primary recruitment pipeline.

The Architecture of Surrender

Perhaps the most humane and effective aspect of India's counterinsurgency was its surrender and rehabilitation policy, which offered a dignified exit for insurgents trapped in the cycle of violence. Progressive state-level schemes, such as Chhattisgarh's '[Lon Varratu](#)' (Return Home) and '[Poona Margem](#)' (New Path), induced massive defection cascades. Over the past decade nearly [8,000 Naxalites](#) laid down their arms, lured by the promise of a better life.

The establishment of ventures like the [Pandum Cafe in Jagdalpur](#) run entirely by former insurgents serves as a powerful testament to the success of these reintegration efforts. Furthermore, the government institutionalized a bureaucratic mechanism to review and [withdraw criminal cases](#) against cooperating cadres, offering them true legal redemption. The state also created local stakes in peace by raising the [Bastariya Battalion](#), recruiting tribal youth directly from erstwhile Maoist strongholds into the central security forces.

Comparing Sri Lankan COIN Experience with India

While India was exposed to the Naxal insurgency, the neighbouring Sri Lanka had to deal with the [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam](#) (LTTE) for nearly 30 year which claimed for a separate land in the island nation. Both India and Sri Lanka ultimately achieved military victories over long-standing insurgencies by demonstrating resolute political will and abandoning fruitless ceasefires that previously allowed rebels to regroup. However, their counterinsurgency (COIN) paradigms diverged significantly in execution.

Sri Lanka adopted a highly kinetic, '[enemy-centric](#)' approach during [Eelam War IV](#), focusing on a "[kill, hold, and build](#)" strategy where the emphasis was more on paralysing the LTTE through head-hunting rather than alienating them from the population. In contrast, India tackled the Naxal-Maoist insurgency through a multidimensional framework epitomized by the [SAMADHAN doctrine](#) that balanced intelligence-driven security operations and financial asphyxiation with a massive push for rural infrastructure development and lucrative surrender and rehabilitation schemes. Although India's strategy successfully eroded the insurgents' geographical footprint by bridging the developmental vacuum and incentivizing mass defections, both nations share the overarching challenge that military success alone cannot extinguish an insurgency if the structural root causes of tribal or ethnic marginalization remain unresolved

Way forward

Preventing future insurgencies in India requires recognizing that military operations alone cannot dismantle the ideological foundations of a rebellion if its [structural root causes](#) remain unaddressed. While the armed command structure of the Maoists has been largely decimated, long-term peace depends heavily on establishing deep state legitimacy. It also requires addressing the [socio-economic contradictions](#) that originally fuelled the movement, particularly the dispossession of tribal communities, land alienation, and the friction between corporate resource extraction and local autonomy.

To prevent a resurgence, the state must rigorously implement constitutional safeguards like the [Forest Rights Act \(FRA\)](#) and the [Panchayats \(Extension to Scheduled Areas\) Act \(PESA\)](#) to guarantee tribal self-governance and land rights. Industrial and mining activities in these

resource-rich regions must be equitable and environmentally conscious to avoid the systemic displacement that historically alienated the rural poor. Furthermore, the government must sustain comprehensive deradicalization and reintegration programs for surrendered cadres, ensuring that new infrastructure, such as roads and mobile towers, is meaningfully accompanied by functioning schools, healthcare, and fair justice systems. Ultimately, history shows that as long as systemic injustice, exploitation, and state neglect persist, the ideological embers of insurgency can easily reignite. Therefore, India must permanently replace the insurgents' narrative of marginalization with genuine democratic inclusion, cultural respect, and equitable socio-economic development to truly win the peace.

The Triumph of the Democratic State

In conclusion, the scale of the Maoist decline is evident in the data; for example, violent incidents in 2024 decreased by 81% since 2010. The number of highly affected districts of Maoist insurgency fell from 35 to zero in April 2026. What was once considered an insurmountable, protracted people's war was effectively neutralized. India's victory over Left-Wing Extremism is a monumental blueprint for modern counterinsurgency. It proves that while precision military force and technological superiority are required to break the back of an armed rebellion, it is the uncompromising delivery of infrastructure, financial inclusion, and compassionate rehabilitation that permanently extinguishes the ideological fire. By replacing the shadow of insurgency with the light of development, the Indian state reclaimed its territory, restored democratic legitimacy, and secured a peaceful, prosperous future for its most vulnerable citizens.